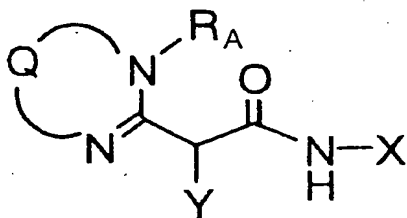


WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A dye-forming coupler represented by formula (I):

formula (I)



wherein  $Q$  represents a residue that forms, together with the  $-N=C=N-$  moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring;  $R_A$  represents an aryl group, a heterocyclic group, or an  $-(R_1)_r-(R_4)_m$  group;  $X$  represents an aryl group;  $Y$  represents a hydrogen atom, or a group that is capable of being split-off upon a coupling reaction with an oxidized product of a developing agent:

wherein,

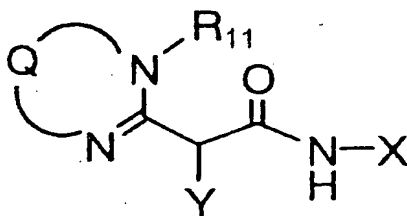
when  $R_A$  represents an  $-(R_1)_r-(R_4)_m$  group,  $R_1$  represents a methylene group, a methine group, or a carbon atom;  $r$  represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $R_1$ s may be the same or different independently, when  $r$  is 2 or more;  $R_4$  represents a substituent except for a hydrogen atom;  $m$

represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $R_4$ s may be the same or different independently, or  $R_4$ s may be combined together to form a multiple bond, or alternatively  $R_4$ s may bond with each other to form a ring, when  $m$  is 2 or more; and the  $-(R_1)_r-(R_4)_m$  group does not represent a straight-chain alkyl group.

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2. The dye-forming coupler as claimed in claim 1, wherein the dye-forming coupler represented by formula (I) is represented by formula (IA):

formula (IA)

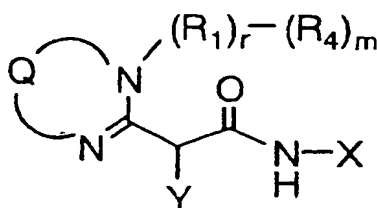


wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring; R<sub>11</sub> represents an aryl group or a heterocyclic group; X represents an aryl group; Y represents a hydrogen atom, or a group that is capable of being split-off upon a coupling reaction with an oxidized product of a developing agent.

3. The dye-forming coupler as claimed in claim 2, wherein, in the dye-forming coupler represented by formula (IA), Q is a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a 4-pyrimidone ring.

4. The dye-forming coupler as claimed in claim 1, wherein the dye-forming coupler represented by formula (I) is represented by formula (IB):

formula (IB)



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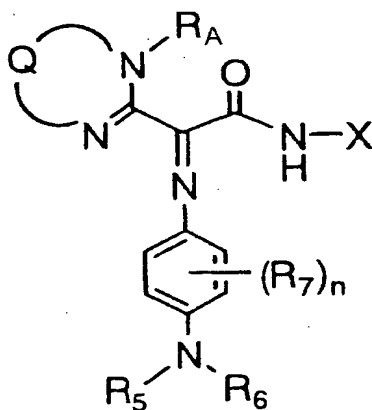
wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring; R<sub>1</sub> represents a methylene group, a methine group, or a carbon atom; r represents an integer of 1 to 30, and R<sub>1</sub>s may be the same or different independently, when r is 2 or more; R<sub>4</sub> represents a substituent except for a hydrogen atom; m represents an integer of 1 to 30, and R<sub>4</sub>s may be the same or different independently, or R<sub>4</sub>s may be combined together to form a multiple bond, or alternatively R<sub>4</sub>s may bond with each other to form a ring, when m is 2 or more; X represents an aryl group; Y represents a hydrogen atom, or a group that is capable of being split-off upon a coupling reaction with an oxidized product of a developing agent; and the -(R<sub>1</sub>)<sub>r</sub>-(R<sub>4</sub>)<sub>m</sub> group does not represent a straight-chain alkyl group.

5. The dye-forming coupler as claimed in claim 4, wherein, in the dye-forming coupler represented by formula (IB), Q is a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a 4-pyrimidone ring; and R<sub>4</sub> is a group selected from the group consisting of an alkyl group, an alkenyl group, an aryl group, a heterocyclic group, a halogen atom, an amino group, a hydroxyl group, a carboxyl group, a sulfo group, an acylamino group, an alkyl- or arylsulfonylamino group, a carbamoyl group, a sulfamoyl group, an acyl group, a sulfonyl group, an alkoxycarbonyl group, an aryloxycarbonyl group, an alkylthio group, an arylthio group, a cyano group, an alkoxy group and an aryloxy group.

6. The dye-forming coupler as claimed in claim 4, wherein, in the dye-forming coupler represented by formula (IB), at least one R<sub>4</sub> bonds with a carbon atom at at least one α- to δ-positions in the (R<sub>1</sub>)<sub>r</sub>.

7. An azomethine dye compound represented by formula (II):

formula (II)



wherein  $\text{Q}$  represents a residue that forms, together with the  $-\text{N}=\text{C}=\text{N}-$  moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring;  $\text{R}_A$  represents an aryl group, a heterocyclic group, or an  $-(\text{R}_1)_r-(\text{R}_4)_m$  group;  $\text{X}$  represents an aryl group;

wherein,

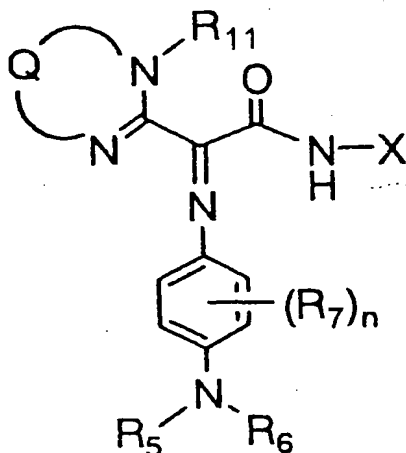
when  $\text{R}_A$  represents an  $-(\text{R}_1)_r-(\text{R}_4)_m$  group,  $\text{R}_1$  represents a methylene group, a methine group, or a carbon atom;  $r$  represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $\text{R}_1$ s may be the same or different independently, when  $r$  is 2 or more;  $\text{R}_4$  represents a substituent except for a hydrogen atom;  $m$  represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $\text{R}_4$ s may be the same or different independently, or  $\text{R}_4$ s may be combine together to form a multiple bond, or alternatively  $\text{R}_4$ s may bond with each other to form a ring, when  $m$  is 2 or more; and the  $-(\text{R}_1)_r-(\text{R}_4)_m$  group does not represent a straight-chain alkyl group;  $\text{R}_5$  and  $\text{R}_6$  each represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent, or  $\text{R}_5$  and  $\text{R}_6$  may bond with each other to form a ring;  $\text{R}_7$  represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent;  $n$  represents 0 (zero) or an integer of 1 to 4, with the proviso that  $\text{R}_7$ s may be the same or different independently, or  $\text{R}_7$ s may bond with each other to form a

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condensed ring, n is 2 or more; or R<sub>7</sub> may bond with R<sub>5</sub> or R<sub>6</sub> to form a condensed ring, n is 1 or more.

8. The azomethine dye compound as claimed in claim 7, wherein the azomethine dye compound represented by formula (II) is represented by formula (IIA):

formula (IIA)



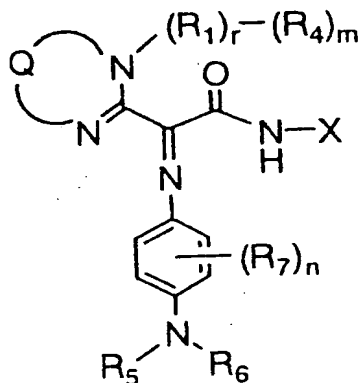
wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring; R<sub>11</sub> represents an aryl group or a heterocyclic group; X represents an aryl group; R<sub>5</sub> and R<sub>6</sub> each represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent, or R<sub>5</sub> and R<sub>6</sub> may bond with each other to form a ring; R<sub>7</sub> represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent; n represents 0 (zero) or an integer of 1 to 4, with the proviso that R<sub>7</sub>s may be the same or different independently, or R<sub>7</sub>s may bond with each other to form a condensed ring, when n is 2 or more; or R<sub>7</sub> may bond with R<sub>5</sub> or R<sub>6</sub> to form a condensed ring, when n is 1 or more.

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9. The azomethine dye compound as claimed in claim 8, wherein, in the azomethine dye compound represented by formula (IIA), Q is a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a 4-pyrimidone ring.

10. The azomethine dye compound as claimed in claim 7, wherein the azomethine dye compound represented by formula (II) is represented by formula (IIB):

formula (IIB)



wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring;  $R_1$  represents a methylene group, a methine group, or a carbon atom;  $r$  represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $R_1$ s may be the same or different independently, when  $r$  is 2 or more;  $R_4$  represents a substituent except for a hydrogen atom;  $m$  represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $R_4$ s may be the same or different independently, or  $R_4$ s may be combined together to form a multiple bond, or alternatively  $R_4$ s may bond with each other to form a ring, when  $m$  is 2 or more; X represents an aryl group; and the  $-(R_1)_r - (R_4)_m$  group does not represent a straight-chain alkyl group;  $R_5$  and  $R_6$  each represent a hydrogen atom or a substituent, or  $R_5$  and  $R_6$  may bond with each other to form a ring;  $R_7$  represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent;  $n$

represents 0 (zero) or an integer of 1 to 4, with the proviso that  $R_7$ s may be the same or different independently, or  $R_7$ s may bond with each other to form a condensed ring, when  $n$  is 2 or more; or  $R_7$  may bond with  $R_5$  or  $R_6$  to form a condensed ring, when  $n$  is 1 or more.

11. The azomethine dye compound as claimed in claim 10, wherein, in the azomethine dye compound represented by formula (IIB),  $Q$  is a residue that forms, together with the  $-N-C=N-$  moiety, a 4-pyrimidone ring; and  $R_4$  is a group selected from the group consisting of an alkyl group, an alkenyl group, an aryl group, a heterocyclic group, a halogen atom, an amino group, a hydroxyl group, a carboxyl group, a sulfo group, an acylamino group, an alkyl- or aryl-sulfonylamino group, a carbamoyl group, a sulfamoyl group, an acyl group, a sulfonyl group, an alkoxy carbonyl group, an aryloxy carbonyl group, an alkylthio group, an arylthio group, a cyano group, an alkoxy group and an aryloxy group.

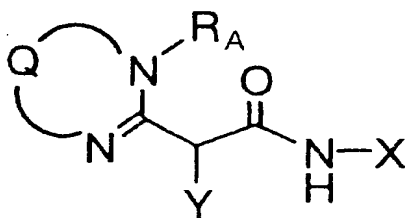
12. The azomethine dye compound as claimed in claim 10, wherein, in the azomethine dye compound represented by formula (IIB), at least one  $R_4$  bonds with a carbon atom at at least one  $\alpha$ - to  $\delta$ -positions in the  $(R_1)_r$ .

13. The dye-forming coupler as claimed in claim 1, wherein  $Q$  represents a residue that forms, together with the  $-N-C=N$  moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring, wherein the members of the nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring are selected from the group consisting of nitrogen and carbon.

14. The azomethine dye compound as claimed in claim 7, wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring, wherein the members of the nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring are selected from the group consisting of nitrogen and carbon.

15. A compound represented by formula (I):

formula (I)



wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring; R<sub>A</sub> represents an aryl group, a heterocyclic group, or an -(R<sub>1</sub>)<sub>r</sub>-(R<sub>4</sub>)<sub>m</sub> group; X represents an aryl group; Y represents a hydrogen atom, or a group that is capable of being split-off upon a coupling reaction with an oxidized product of a developing agent:

wherein,

when R<sub>A</sub> represents an -(R<sub>1</sub>)<sub>r</sub>-(R<sub>4</sub>)<sub>m</sub> group, R<sub>1</sub> represents a methylene group, a methine group, or a carbon atom; r represents an integer of 1 to 30, and R<sub>1</sub>s may be the same or different independently, when r is 2 or more; R<sub>4</sub> represents a substituent except for a hydrogen atom; m

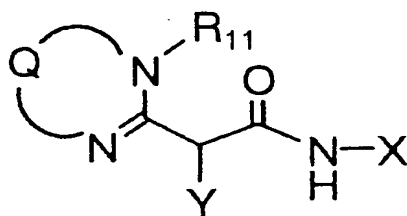
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represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $R_4$ s may be the same or different independently, or  $R_4$ s may be combined together to form a multiple bond, or alternatively  $R_4$ s may bond with each other to form a ring, when  $m$  is 2 or more; and the  $-(R_1)_r-(R_4)_m$  group does not represent a straight-chain alkyl group.

16. The compound as claimed in claim 15, wherein the compound represented by formula (I) is represented by formula (IA):

formula (IA)

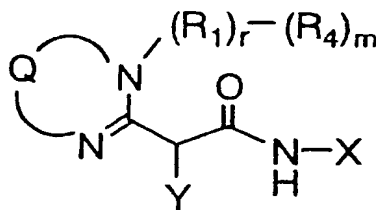


wherein  $Q$  represents a residue that forms, together with the  $-N-C=N-$  moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring;  $R_{11}$  represents an aryl group or a heterocyclic group;  $X$  represents an aryl group;  $Y$  represents a hydrogen atom, or a group that is capable of being split-off upon a coupling reaction with an oxidized product of a developing agent.

17. The compound as claimed in claim 16, wherein, in the compound represented by formula (IA),  $Q$  is a residue that forms, together with the  $-N-C=N$  moiety, a 4-pyrimidone ring.

18. The compound as claimed in claim 15, wherein the compound represented by formula (I) is represented by formula (IB):

formula (IB)



wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N- moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring;  $R_1$  represents a methylene group, a methine group, or a carbon atom;  $r$  represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $R_1$ s may be the same or different independently, when  $r$  is 2 or more;  $R_4$  represents a substituent except for a hydrogen atom;  $m$  represents an integer of 1 to 30, and  $R_4$ s may be the same or different independently, or  $R_4$ s may be combined together to form a multiple bond, or alternatively  $R_4$ s may bond with each other to form a ring, when  $m$  is 2 or more; X represents an aryl group; Y represents a hydrogen atom, or a group that is capable of being split-off upon a coupling reaction with an oxidized product of a developing agent; and the  $-(R_1)_r-(R_4)_m$  group does not represent a straight-chain alkyl group.

19. The compound as claimed in claim 18, wherein, in the compound represented by formula (IB), Q is a residue that forms, together with the -N-C=N moiety, a 4-pyrimidone ring; and  $R_4$  is a group selected from the group consisting of an alkyl group, an alkenyl group, an aryl group, a heterocyclic group, a halogen atom, an amino group, a hydroxyl group, a carboxyl group, a sulfo group, an acylamino group, an alkyl- or arylsulfonylamino group, a carbamoyl group, a sulfamoyl group, an acyl group, a sulfonyl group, an alkoxycarbonyl group, an aryloxycarbonyl group, an alkylthio group, an

arylthio group, a cyano group, an alkoxy group and an aryloxy group.

20. The compound as claimed in claim 18, wherein, in the compound represented by formula (IB), at least one  $R_4$  bonds with a carbon atom at at least one  $\alpha$ - to  $\delta$ -positions in the  $(R_1)_r$ .

21. The compound as claimed in claim 15, wherein Q represents a residue that forms, together with the  $-N-C=N$  moiety, a nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring, wherein the members of the nitrogen-containing 6-membered ring are selected from the group consisting of nitrogen and carbon.